

Guide to Lecture 12: Parmenides and the Eleatics Part 1

- A) **Introduction.** Parmenides (born ca. 515 BC) focused on possibility of change (of all sorts), but especially coming-to-be and passing-away.
- B) **Life.** From Elea, met young Socrates ca. 450 BC; Plato wrote a dialogue based on this meeting (trying out his own philosophy on Parmenides).
- C) **Beliefs/Themes:**
- a) Two paths: Persuasion/Persuasive Truth/Truth, and the Path of Mere Mortals. Justice has led Parmenides to the Path of Truth. This is not as formal and systematic a distinction as found later (e.g., believe and knowledge, reality and appearance, etc.)
 - b) Being is; becoming and change are illusion. Anything coming-to-be would have to do so from either being or not-being; but if from being, there is no coming-to-be; and not-being cannot generate anything. Therefore, Being is one, necessary, fully present, eternal, etc. Becoming, change, pluralism are illusory.
 - i) Example: a flower.
 - ii) Objection: Parmenides glosses both concrete conditions and the absence of the flower as “not-being.” But this is a mistake.
 - iii) Dykes’s Eleatic response. Caution about adopting later terminology.
 - c) Unity of being and thinking. Some possible meanings:
 - i) Being can only be accessed by thought and concepts.
 - ii) Our thought must exist in and be part of Being.
 - (1) Cannot exist outside of being, because that would put us in non-being.

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- (2) Cannot be inside of but different from Being, because that would introduce negation (not-being) inside Being.
- iii) Aristotle's noetic truth.
- iv) Self-consciousness, self-knowledge.
- d) "Materialism." Being or the One is an eternal sphere, bound on all sides by Necessity, Fate, and/or Justice.

D) Influence on other Philosophers.

- a) Atomists/Pluralists: the ultimate principles need to be unchanging and indestructible.
- b) Plato. Ultimate reality is a set of everlasting objects called Forms/Ideas, perhaps in the mind of God, but include numbers, values, and some concepts Parmenides would not allow.